



WASHOE COUNTY

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CM/ACM _____
Finance LC/MS
DA KM
Risk Mgt NA
HR JG
Other NA

STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 22, 2015

DATE: August 21, 2015
TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Russ Pedersen, Chief Deputy
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THROUGH: Chuck Allen, Sheriff CA 3/17

SUBJECT: Recommendation to authorize three (3) unfunded Communication Specialist Trainee positions to be utilized for the training of specialists for attrition preparation and planning; and if approved, authorize Human Resources to make the necessary adjustments. (All Commission Districts)

SUMMARY

Washoe County Sheriff's Office requests three (3) unfunded Communication Specialist Trainee positions to accommodate the lengthy lead time (approximately one year) required to recruit, hire and train candidates as Communication Specialists.

Washoe County Strategic Objective Supported by this item: Safe, secure and healthy communities.

PREVIOUS ACTION

None

BACKGROUND

The Sheriff's Office currently operates the Communication Center with an authorized strength of twenty-four (24) Communication Specialists and four (4) supervisors, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The Center is responsible for emergency operations dispatching and call taking for the Washoe County Sheriff's Office, the Department of Alternative Sentencing, Truckee Meadows Fire, North Lake Tahoe Fire, and Tribal Agencies.

The Center at times can experience a high turnover rate in the Communication Specialist Trainee classification. In addition, there is significant competition from neighboring law enforcement agencies for the pool of candidates. During the 13/14 Fiscal year, the

AGENDA ITEM # 514

Communication Center had as many as six (6) open positions which caused a significant strain on the operation and employees of the center.

Without the additional positions, Washoe County Sheriff's Office is forced to use vacant Communication Specialist positions to accommodate the randomness of demand for new hires, and the lengthy recruitment and training process. This approach has proved increasingly unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

1. Under County procedure, the hiring of a Communication Specialist Trainee is contingent upon having a vacant Communication Specialist position. This means that the Communication Center will be chronically under-staffed because of the lead time associated with the hiring and training process.
2. The recruitment process includes a written test, an oral interview, and a complete and thorough background check. On average, this process will take three to six months. Once a candidate is selected, they must complete training on telephones, and master procedures on radio channels law enforcement main, law enforcement secondary, Truckee fire, North Lake fire, emergency medical dispatching certification, emergency police dispatching certification, and policies and procedures. To complete the Communications training takes 32 to 36 weeks. To get a Communication Specialist completely through the process is a total of 14 to 18 months.
3. The restriction of filling only vacant positions, or being limited to a six-week overfill, means that the Department can never hire and train the Specialist in time to fill known future vacancies. We will always be one year behind the retirement cycle. On a number of occasions, this has caused stress on the operation of the Center and the employees.

Approving three (3) Communication Specialist Trainee positions would enable the Sheriff's Office to proactively respond to ongoing vacancies that occur because of retirements, resignations and other separations from County service. Approval would also reduce errors in personnel tracking/management.

Many law enforcement agencies utilize similar "hire ahead" programs in order to accommodate the long lead time necessary to recruit, hire and train personnel, and thus prevent vacant positions and the resulting impact on service to the citizenry.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of these recruit positions will be covered within the existing Sheriff's Office budget by salary/benefit savings of unfilled positions.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners authorize three (3) unfunded Communication Specialist Trainee positions to be utilized for the training of specialists for attrition preparation and planning; and if approved, authorize Human Resources to make the necessary adjustments.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

Move to authorize three (3) unfunded Communication Specialist Trainee positions to be utilized for the training of specialists for attrition preparation and planning; and if approved, authorize Human Resources to make the necessary adjustments.